

Overcoming Evil.

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Matt. 6:13 "Deliver us from evil."

INTRO& Evil is a problem to every man whether he be Xn or pagan. Evil is the common enemy of all mankind. Since Jesus worked only for the good of man, to get the best of evil and not let it get the best of us is the supreme effort of his followers. How can we overcome evil?

Some say, "Let evil alone and it will die out!". We are not to fight crime, injustice and greed—just bear them patiently and they will ultimately disappear. "Resist not evil" "If a man smites you on the right cheek, turn the other to him also." "If he takes away your coat, let him have your cloak also". "A soft answer turneth away wrath".

We never got rid of the Black Plague that way. nor did we overcome malaria that way. We fight sickness and disease to a finish.

Our schools are fighting institutions—fighting ignorance, superstition and inefficiency.

The same with bad housing, unemployment, disabilities of old age and many other social and economic ills. We try to overcome evils, do away with them.

Some say that God is good, God is all in all and there is no such a thing as evil—sin, pain, disease, or death. But Jesus knew better. He saw life as it is and frankly recognized the presence of evil and suffering in the world. He would not say with Browning that "God is in his heaven and all is well with the world".

Let us take a look at Jesus' parable of the wheat and the tares, not for the purpose of finding a solution to the age-old problem of evil, but to learn from the Master how best to overcome evil.

- I. First note that after the man planted his wheat an enemy came and ~~planted~~ sowed tares. All our harvests have to be reaped where weeds grow. All of our gains in life have to be gotten in the face of opposition.

1. The enemy is here in full force. The world is not what it should be. What grief and pain there is in life! No matter how hard we try to make the world better we run up against stiff opposition. The facts of life, ~~escape~~ from the individual and the home to the community, state and the nations, compel us to say, "An enemy hath done this!"

We may call the enemy what we will-Satan, the devil, Fate, Human Perversity, or what not. There it is! Wherever wheat grows weeds appear also. All our gains have to be worked out in spite of difficulties. We have to take the rough with the smooth. Light-darkness, joy-sorrow, good-evil. In spite of all my efforts to be and do good evil appears.

And how discouraging life often becomes! Men meet with so many and severe disappointments that they grow discouraged and rebellious. If there is an infinite goodness and justice, if God is love and mercy, why all this pain and grief?

Christ was no dreamer. He drew his picture of true to life as he saw it, according to the "God of things as they are". His picture of the wheat and the tares is true to life and we all know it. We have to raise our wheat in fields where weeds grow or else go without bread. We have to maintain our efficiency, ~~physically, morally and~~ ~~spiritually~~, in a world where all sorts of forces are at work against us, or else go without health. We have to gain character and happiness in the very teeth of temptation, trial and adversity. The enemy is here. Life is a stiff, hard climb up hill all the way. Wherever we go or whatever we do, the tares appear.

II. The second thing we should note in this picture of the wheat and the tares is that our main business is to raise wheat, not to destroy weeds.

It is never wise to turn a wheat field upside down and tear everything to pieces just to destroy some weeds. A certain wise patience is needed to raise wheat or children, in helping people to develop character or in building a better social order. A reckless energy which wants to rip everything up the back doesn't get anywhere.

Young ardent reformers, always on the offside.

Certain periodicals in this country-never produce anything, but scream louder than anyone else.

Our wise Teacher and portrayer of our parable once said, "Inasmuch as you have done it unto the least of these- the hungry, the sick, the lonely, the imprisoned- you have done it unto me. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." The kingdom of God comes by deeds of kindness and love, not by bitterness and violence.

This same Teacher said, "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven". Not like brute force, not like political coercion, not like some economic device which would turn everything upside down. It comes by the gradual permeation of society with a finer spirit, with His Spirit.

His method is slow-painfully slow, but it gets right down to the root of the whole matter. It doesn't deal symptoms, it gets at the cause of the disease, and undertakes to remove it.

Give everyone in America all the comforts of life- plenty to eat and drink, autos and radios and all the other electric devices, mansions to live in and plenty of leisure to enjoy life, and what will they do with their lives? Will they suddenly become unselfish, devoted to the higher things of life, more public spirited?

The 400 of every community- are they any better than the rest? They who now have plenty, are they more unselfish and devoted to the interests of others?

Surroundings surely have a certain value, don't misunderstand, but environment doesn't make character. It is the other way around- character makes environment. Character comes mainly from within. In the last analysis, out of the heart are the issues of life. Social well-being must finally rest upon a certain quality of human personality in control of these intricate, economic processes which make up our social order.

III. "If we live by the spirit, let us also walk by the the spirit." The fruits of the spirit are love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness fidelity, self-control. These are the wholesome moral qualities which finally must undergird and sustain all human well-being.

"Be not anxious, therefore, saying, How many millions of automobiles should we have in this country? How much furniture, but largely on the installment plan? How many changes of raiment to put on and off? How much showy, noisy, thoughtless diversion? Pagans make all these their aim in life."

To possess all things without developing that inner quality of life which alone gives true values to things is pagan. Put first things first. Seek first the rule of the divine spirit in your own life, and then, upon that basis you can add all the things you need. Our first and main business is to raise wheat, a finer quality of inner life, the good, sound grain of Christian character.

The parade in Binghamton, N.Y. On May 1, 1934, 75,000 employees and their families-employees of the Endicott-Johnson Shoe Factory. A parade of gratitude and appreciation.

Such men in the industrial world are sowing the wheat of good-will, friendliness and co-operation.

III. The third outstanding feature of the parable picture is the harvest- Let both grow together until the harvest".

Both the wheat and the tares were using the same set of friendly forces-the soil, the warm rays of the sun and the rain, the one to produce something good, the other to produce something bad, yet they both grew together.

Jesus tells us that when harvest time comes, the tares shall be gathered and burned, while the wheat is garnered. In the human harvest time angels shall segregate the evil from the good and destroy it, but the good shall be gathered taken to the Father's house there to shine like the sun.

The meaning of this picture is very plain and absolutely true to the facts of experience. The mingling of good and evil will go on but not forever. Greed and selfishness, ill will and cruelty are doomed. In an unfolding advancing moral order they have no place.

Scientists tell us that the secret of survival has been "mutual aid", and the chief cause of extinction "failure to cooperate". Greed, cruelty, ill will do not cooperate

The dinosaurs, the lions and tigers have receded; humans and domestic animals have increased. The gentle, thru cooperation, are actually inheriting the earth.

In this world men reap what they sow, and the harvest time comes surely and swiftly. Every day is a judgment day, every day the wheat is being separated from the ~~wheat~~ tares. Right is right and wrong is wrong. Evil is not good in the making as some superficial thinkers would have us believe. Evil is an act of rebellion against the will and method of our Maker, and by its own inherent quality is doomed.

Our social and economic problems are, first of all and most of all, a moral problem. Society cannot be healed by moving it from one house into another, be it from a hut into a mansion. The trouble goes much deeper. There is a God and nothing but his righteousness and peace and good will can stand the tests ~~of~~ which he imposes upon all our schemes. The traffic regulations for economic and social driving are very strict and are rigidly enforced by the very laws of our God-made world order.

Only on the basis of friendliness and cooperation, ~~can~~ only on the basis of intelligent good will and devotion to higher and wider interests than one's own immediate personal advantage, can we build a social order fit to live in, one that will stand.

We have to deal with imperfect materials and it requires lots of patience.

Wherever we go the tares appear.

We find knots in the log, slag in the coal and spots on the sun.

Marcus Aurelius Calvin The Puritans

The Master himself had to use faulty material - Peter, James and John and the rest, yet out of those imperfect men he organized a movement which has changed the whole moral history of the race.

The Church of Christ, likewise is not a county fair for the display of prize squashes and finished saints. It is a school for the training and development of imperfect people until they are worthy to be called the sons and daughters of the Most High. We who are church members are in the school of Christ, learning of Him how to live, how to grow the wheat of Xn character unto a harvest of eternal life.

Mud-holes, rattlesnakes, and skunks in Yosemite.

"Whatsoever things are just, true, clean; whatsoever things are honorable, pure and lovely, think on these things". Make then the steel frame and reinforced concrete of your manhood and womanhood. "Think on these things and the God of Peace shall be with you."

Our main business is to sow wheat and trust the harvest to God.